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15 October 1992

~~Top Secret~~**KOREAS: New Obstacles in Dialogue**

The atmosphere for North-South dialogue has deteriorated during the past week.

[redacted] The South has announced that it will raise the spy case at the first meeting of the Joint Reconciliation Commission on 5 November. North Korea claims the case is trumped up; it also has taken the offensive on next year's annual Team Spirit exercise by publicly threatening to cut off the dialogue if the exercise is held. Press reports indicate that the Joint Nuclear Control Commission (JNCC) made almost no progress yesterday, in part because P'yongyang used much of the meeting to lecture Seoul about Team Spirit, but the two sides agreed to meet again on 29 October.

Comment: The current harsh rhetoric highlights the difficulty of resolving longstanding political and military issues. P'yongyang portrayed suspension of Team Spirit this year as a major victory and almost certainly would suspend the dialogue if next year's exercise takes place. The South may still hope North Korea will be more forthcoming in the JNCC, thus justifying another suspension of Team Spirit. In any case, negative domestic reaction to the espionage issue, as well as pressure from government hardliners, probably will compel Seoul to delay economic exchanges with the North.

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